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APRIL 2013



## RED DRAGON

We test drive the ex-Richard Seaman 1936 Aston Martin Speed Model

### FEATURE

Extraordinary Men

### HEROES

Mika Häkkinen

### INTERVIEW

Phil Remington, Remembered



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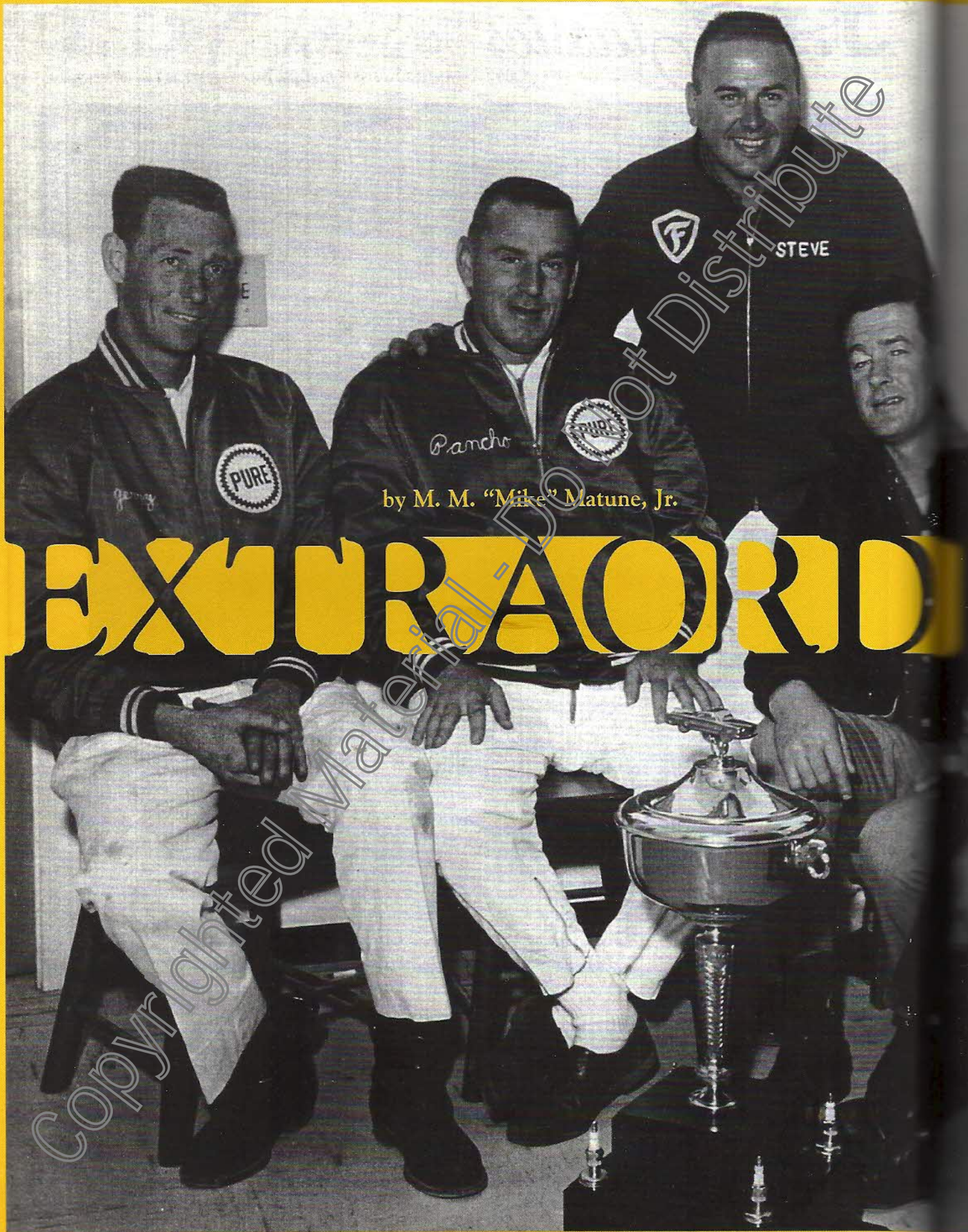
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Mike Jigge



by M. M. "Mike" Matune, Jr.

# EXTRAORDINARY

*"There are no great men,  
only great challenges that  
ordinary men are forced by  
circumstances to meet."*

— Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey

It could have all ended so differently, this confluence of seemingly random events that culminated that cold Valentine's Day in 1963 at Daytona International Speedway, were it not for five men having little in common beyond their chosen avocation/vocation of auto racing. This could have turned out to be another footnoted story in racing lore about a race driver losing his life. Instead, it became a story of ordinary men meeting the greatest of challenges. Instead of that ugly footnote, it became a story of heroic action and a life saved.

In best story tradition, it all began far away, in Modena, Italy, where Maserati's racing fortunes were in a notable decline. The Tipo 151, a V8-powered, front-engined coupe, represented one of the last gasps of this formerly formidable marque. Blindingly fast in a straight line, the Tipo 151's downfall was its lack of reliability and development. By late 1962 it became clear the Tipo 151 was not going to be the world beater everyone had hoped.

Another element of our story was occurring at about the same time in Dearborn, Michigan. Rebuffed in his attempt to buy legendary Italian nameplate Ferrari, Henry Ford II and his Ford Motor Company were entering their "Total Performance" program, which would eventually see them attain victories in almost all of the world's major motorsport venues. These two apparently unconnected events came together in the New York garage of U.S. Maserati distributor Briggs Cunningham and Alfred Momo. Momo installed a Holman & Moody-prepared 427-cubic-inch

# ORDINARY MEN

Ford engine into one of Cunningham's Tipo 151s for entry in that year's American Challenge Cup at Daytona. The Cup was for "classified" cars; those being production-based cars with production engines limited to 7-liters. Rules permitted the mixing of engines and cars, as with the Maserati-Ford hybrid. Other cars taking advantage of these rules included Mickey Thompson-entered Corvettes powered by 427-cubic-inch "Mystery Motors" and a 421-cubic-inch-powered Pontiac Tempest prepared by Ray Nichels (the race's eventual winner).

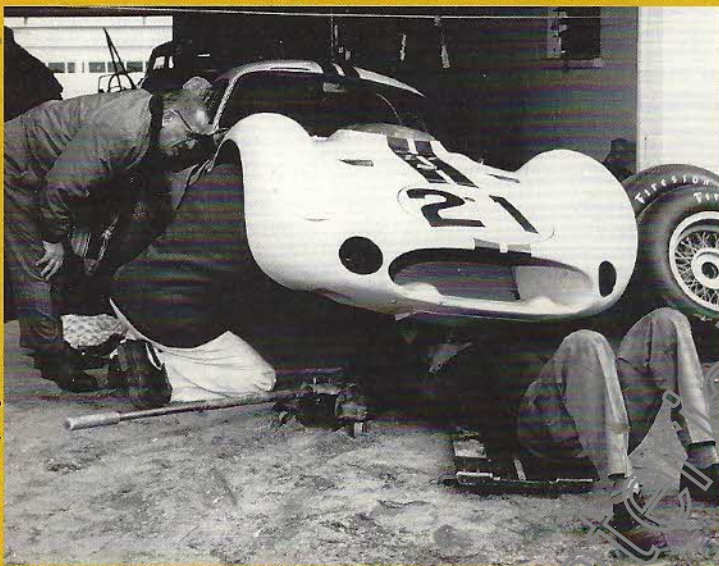
While the Ford engine weighed more and produced less horsepower than the Maserati power plant it replaced, Momo felt its significantly higher torque would give it an edge. Modifications to the car and engine were conducted in a very short time frame; the race-ready engine arriving from Holman & Moody only a couple of weeks before the car was loaded for the trip to Daytona. There was no time available for testing, which Momo said would be conducted upon arrival in Florida. The car's appearance in the American Challenge Cup was only part of the Maserati-Ford's Speed Weeks activities. The second part of the plan was an assault on the Closed Course Speed Record.

Slated to drive the car was Marvin Panch, a Wisconsin-born driver then living in Daytona Beach, who had won the 1961 Daytona 500 driving a year-old Smokey Yunick prepared Pontiac. Panch was well-liked and intelligent, once called by his manager, Bob Latford, one of racing's "thinkingest" drivers. Panch's presence in the Maserati was probably sealed by his position as a Ford driver for that year's Daytona 500 in a Wood Brothers-entered 1963 1/2

(Left to right) Jerry Raborn, Marvin Panch, Steve Petrasek, Ernie Gahan and Bill Wimble gather around the trophy for NASCAR's Buddy Shuman Award honoring their efforts.



For the first time in his career, Marvin Panch posed for a photo before an event. He would never do so again.



**(Above)** Under the watchful eye of chief mechanic Alfred Momo (left), Panch works on the Ford-engined Maserati Tipo 151 he was to drive in the American Challenge sports car race at Daytona International Speedway. During practice for the race, however, the car flipped and caught fire, trapping Panch inside. He was pulled from the flames by five rescuers, although he did suffer serious burns on his back, neck and hands that hospitalized him for two months.

**(Below)** Panch sits for a family photo with daughter Marvette and son Richie, who would himself grow up to emulate his dad and become a racing driver.



fastback Galaxie. Panch's Speed Weeks would be busy. In addition to the record attempts and drives in the Daytona 500 and American Challenge Race, he was also slated to be reunited with his 1961-winning Pontiac, now competing in the Permatex support race, where he would again be driving for Smokey Yunick.

His first impressions of the Maserati-Ford were prophetic. Feeling the car lacked rollover protection, Panch told the team to put a roll cage in it, but time never allowed this to happen. Preparation included efforts by Leonard Wood and Panch to set up the suspension. Augie Pabst, who had driven Cunningham's Tipo 151 in its Maserati engine configuration three times the previous year, would take the car out for laps around the apron. Pabst found the car's road manners troubling; feeling that perhaps the Ford engine's increased torque had upset the handling. Pabst had first-hand knowledge of the potential perils of racing a sports car on Daytona's high banks. A year earlier he'd been hospitalized for four months after crashing a Cunningham-Momo Maserati in practice for the first Daytona Continental.

Panch later related the story of his accident in his autobiography, *Racing Memories From A NASCAR Legend* (available at [www.marvinpanch.com](http://www.marvinpanch.com)). On the morning of February 14, 1963, his uneasy feeling continued and he called home asking his wife to bring his flameproof coveralls to the track. As was common practice at the time, these were made of cotton and treated with a fire-resistant compound but, as it turned out, would do the job. Wearing the coveralls, Panch took the Maserati-Ford out in the morning session, eventually being clocked at speeds in excess of 163 mph. That afternoon Panch and the Maserati-Ford returned to the track. Alone on the track with the car feeling better than it had in the morning session, Panch signaled he was ready to begin the record attempt. Things began to unravel part way down the backstretch at speeds approaching 200 mph. The front end lifted and Panch feathered the throttle to bring it down. The car went sideways and tapped the guard rail at the top of the track. After the car hit the rail, it began sliding down the track. Upon coming to the apron, the Maserati-Ford began a series of rolls, eventually ending up on its roof. It continued skimming back up the track on its roof, striking the rail again before sliding back down and coming to rest on the inside of the corner.

When the car skidded along the track, the fuel filler snapped off and gas began spilling out. A Tipo 151 held about 30 gallons of gasoline in three tanks surrounding its cockpit. As the car stopped, the gas ignited. Panch attempted to fight the blaze with the car's small fire extinguisher, but couldn't get a clear shot at the flames. Although able to cut the ignition and unfasten his belt, Panch couldn't exit the now burning, upside-down car. To egress/egress, the Tipo 151 had been designed with doors that reached into the roof. The inverted car rested on part of the door trapping Panch inside.

As Panch crashed, two drivers, Ernie Gahan and Bill Wimble were driving through the tunnel leading to the infield. Pulling their car against the fence and using the hood to help them scale the fence, they were the first to arrive at the flaming wreckage but were unable to lift the car. Soon joining them was Jerry Raborn, a mechanic who worked at Holman & Moody and who had served as Panch's mechanic in the past. Raborn would spend time from the pits in his own car and scale the fence.

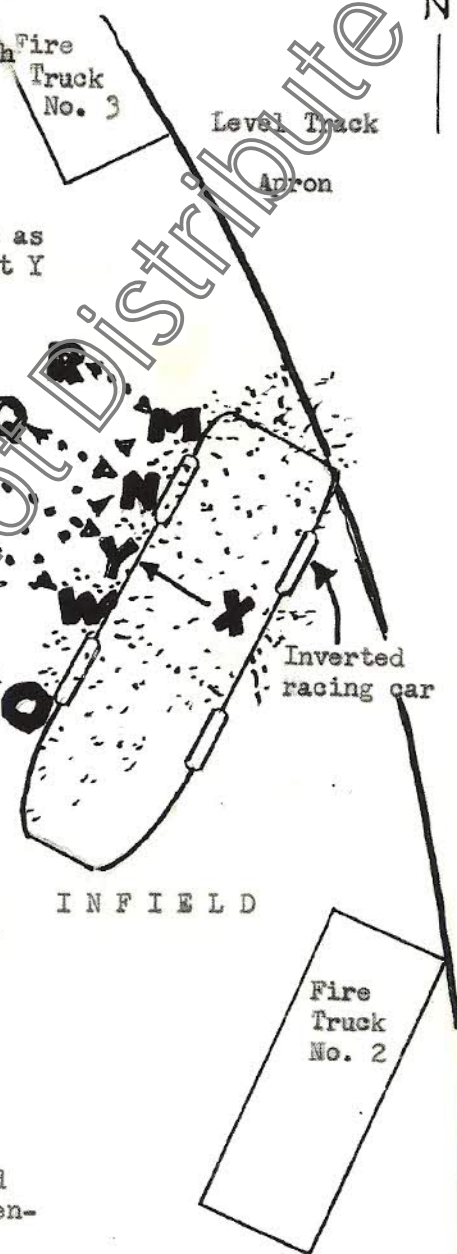
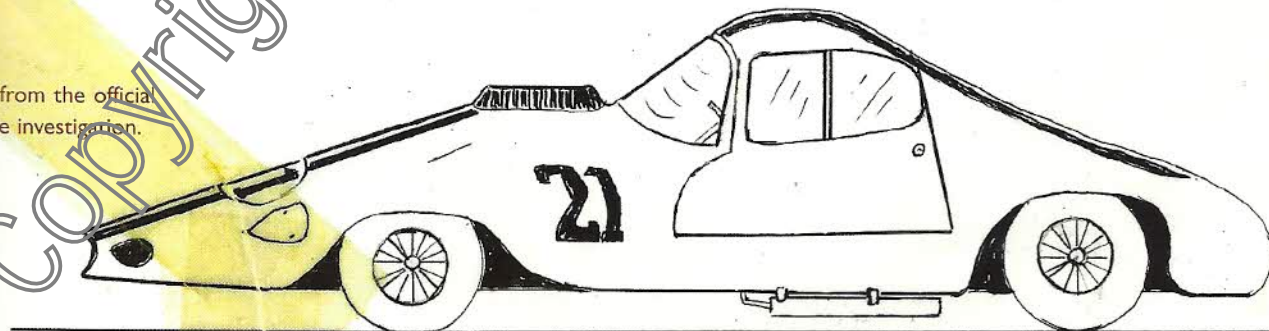
The three were joined by other rescuers arriving from the pits. Tiny Lund, who was at Daytona looking for a ride in the 500, and

CASE OF ERNEST E. GAHAN, FILE NO. 46392, ET AL

- 1 - position in wrecked and burning racing car of Marvin E. Panch
- 2 - course of Ernest E. Gahan to side of car
- 3 - course of William R. Wimble to side of car
- 4 - course of Jerry A. Raborn to side of car
- 5 - course of DeWayne E. Lund to car carrying hand extinguisher
- 6 - course of Stephen E. Petrasek to car
- 7 - positions of Wimble, Gahan, Petrasek and Raborn respectively as they attempted to raise wreckage to reach Panch while Lund at Y emptied hand extinguisher on cockpit area
- 8 - course Wimble retreated burned on right hand at sudden burst of flame from beneath car
- 9 - course Gahan retreated burned on both hands and face at burst of flame
- 10 - course Lund retreated at burst of flame
- 11 - course Petrasek retreated burned on hands and face at burst of flame
- 12 - course Raborn retreated, his hair and eyebrows singed, at burst of flame
- 13 - course Petrasek, summoning others, returned to car on seeing leg of Panch move in door opening.

- 14 - course Wimble returned to car
- 15 - course Gahan returned to car
- 16 - course Lund returned to car
- 17 - course Raborn returned to car
- 18, 19 - positions of Wimble, Gahan and Raborn as they lifted on car while Lund at Y and Petrasek at W obtained leg-hold on Panch by which they drew him to and through small door-opening.
- 20 - course Lund and Petrasek drew Panch away from car
- 21, 22 and 23 - course Wimble, Gahan and Raborn respectively retreated
- 24 - position of Lund, Petrasek and Panch when explosion occurred enveloping car in massive flame
- 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100 - positions respectively of Wimble, Gahan and Raborn when explosion occurred.

SIDE VIEW OF RACING CAR THAT FIGURED SHOWING PROFILE, ELEVATION

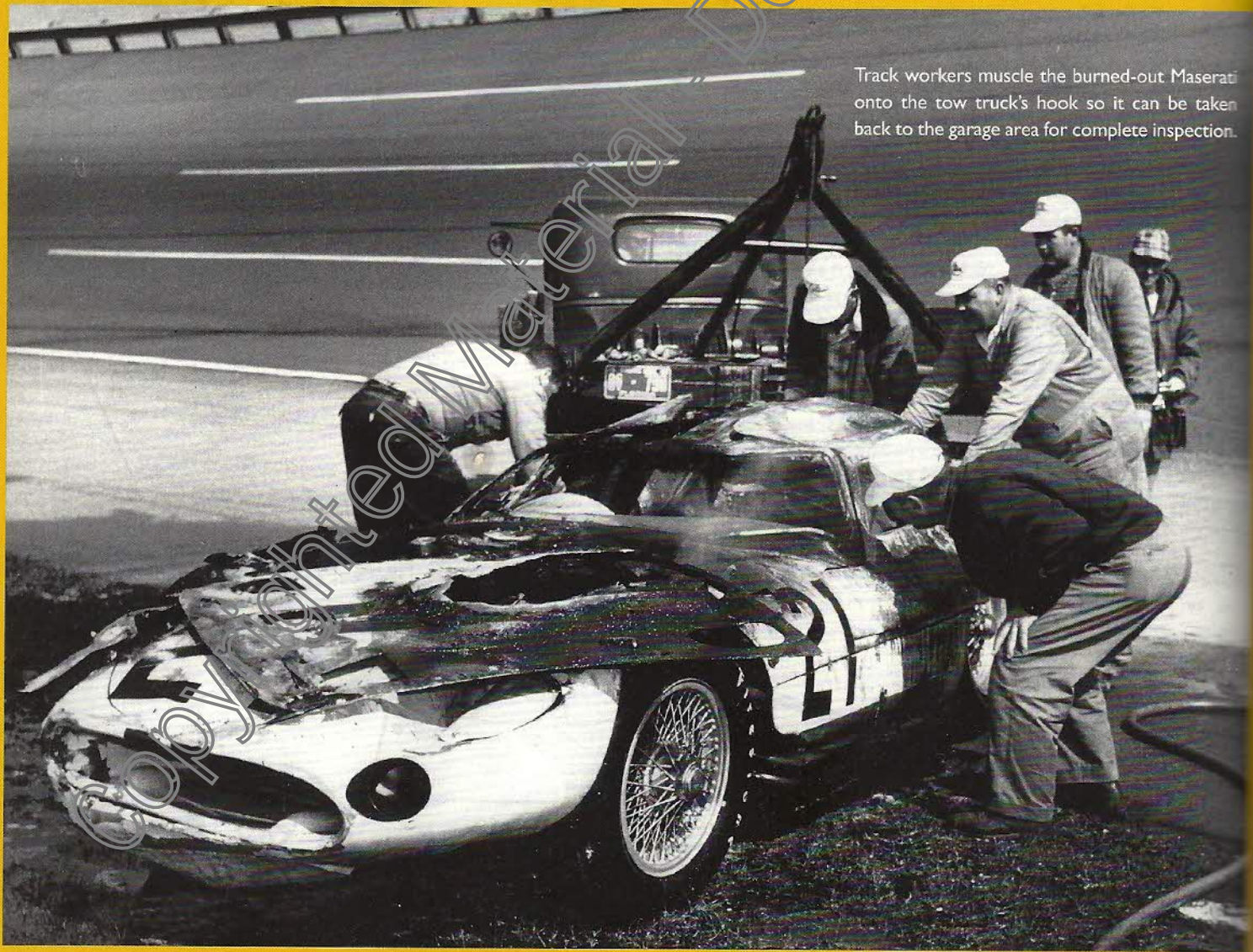


A page from the official Carnegie investigation.

Steve Petrasek, a Firestone Tire Engineer, were watching Panch's record attempt that afternoon. They responded in a station wagon driven by a NASCAR Official. Together, they attempted to lift the car while Panch continued his effort to extricate himself. Lund had taken an extinguisher from the station wagon and was discharging it on Panch. As the car was lifted, gasoline that had pooled under the car ignited, forcing the rescuers back, but as the rescuers retreated, Petrasek saw that Panch was still trying to kick himself loose from the car. Inside, Panch was saying his last personal good-byes and preparing to take a deep breath to shorten the pain and suffering associated with burning to death. Petrasek, waving his arms and yelling, "He's still alive! We've got to get him out of there!" reassembled the five and advanced on the burning car. Together they waded into the waist-high flames. Gahan, Wimble and Raborn lifted the car and Petrasek pulled on Panch's legs. Lund continued discharging the fire extinguisher and then joined Petrasek in pulling on Panch's legs. Petrasek later said they had pulled so hard on Panch's leg they had begun to tear the skin. After clearing the car, Panch broke loose from Lund and Petrasek and stood up, flames covering his coveralls. The official knocked him to the ground and began rolling him in the grass as Petrasek beat on the flames with both hands. By now the car was enveloped in flames, some reaching 15 feet high. In the end, the blaze would take almost 25 minutes to extinguish.

Following the accident and despite reportedly walking to the ambulance at the scene and later from the ambulance into the track infirmary, Panch was rushed to Daytona's Halifax Hospital. His physician, Dr. Achilles A. Monaco, reported Panch suffered first-, second- and third-degree burns, along with internal bleeding and liver injuries resulting from the impact. Monaco would initially call his condition "serious," but Panch would recuperate quickly, his condition being upgraded to "fair" in around three days and "very good" in less than two weeks. An impressive effort, seeing as how Panch had elected to bypass the pain killers offered, afraid of their side effects.

Gahan, Petrasek and Wimble were all treated for burns and released. They would appear later at the track, heavily bandaged. In addition to his burns, Petrasek had torn a muscle and would suffer from decreased vision related to his injuries for some two weeks. Gahan and Wimble would go on to compete in the Permatex race two weeks later. Still nursing first- and second-degree burns, Gahan was able to win the Sportsman portion of the race; while Wimble finished 11<sup>th</sup> after breaking a shock. Lund suffered a back sprain and Raborn had singed hair and eyebrows, although neither was treated at the scene. For their efforts Ernest E. Gahan, DeWayne L. Lund, Jerry A. Raborn, Stephen E. Petrasek and William R. Wimble were recognized by the Carnegie Hero Fund with the Carnegie Medal for civilian heroism and



Track workers muscle the burned-out Maserati onto the tow truck's hook so it can be taken back to the garage area for complete inspection.



500 awards; and by NASCAR with the Buddy Shuman Award for outstanding contribution to NASCAR.

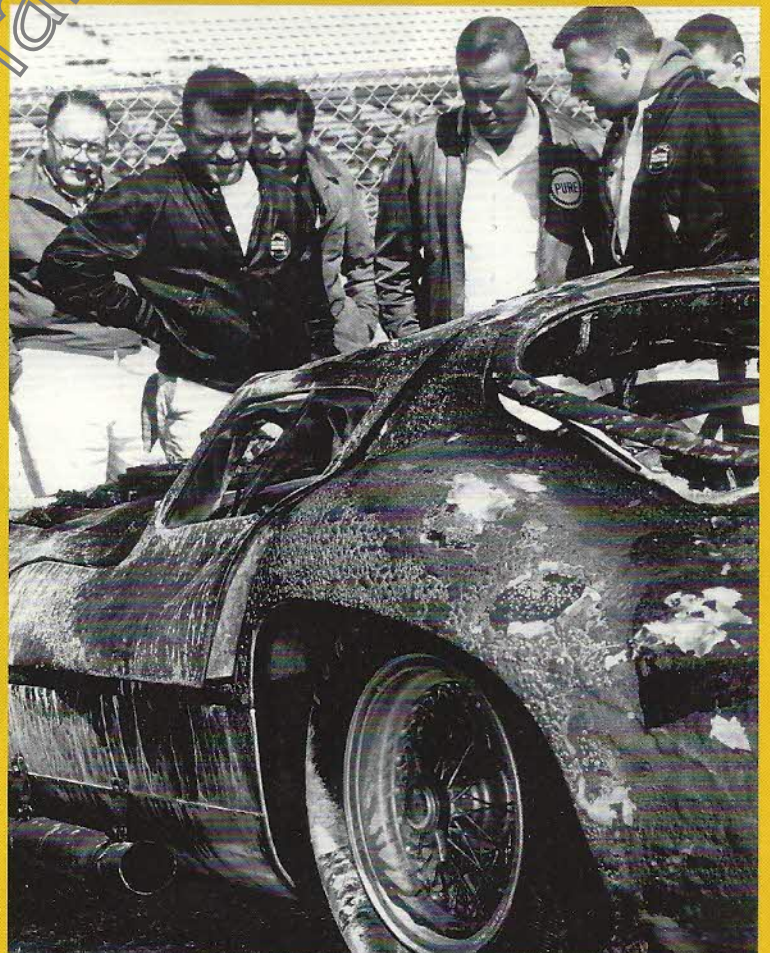
Like a lot of drivers, Panch himself was somewhat superstitious. After that day, in addition to the traditional superstitions of peanuts in their shells and green cars, Panch added posing for pictures before a race. Seems that he had posed for pictures before the record attempt, something he had not done before. After that, he only posed after a run.

And Tiny Lund? Well, he could easily be a story all by himself. With Panch sidelined, the Wood Brothers found themselves with a competitive car for the 500 but no driver. They elected to start Lund based on his previous performance as a driver and his efforts to save Panch.

The race held on February 24, 1963, was delayed by rain for more than an hour and a half, and the early laps were run under yellow to help dry the track. Lund would stay in touch with the leaders throughout the race, but only challenged for the lead in the late stages. At an early caution after the race went green, Leonard and Glen Wood found the car had gas remaining after refueling the car and went two extra laps before fueling again. Each lap the Wood Brothers went two extra laps, 42 vs. 40 for the rest of the field. Still, victory was hardly assured as Lund battled hard with fellow Ford drivers Ned Jarrett and Fred Lorenzen. Eventually, both had to dash into the pits for late fuel stops. Lund, having babied the Ford and skillfully drafted others through the race, was able to complete the 500 miles with no tire stops and only four fuel stops to the others' five. The fact that those pit stops were carried out by the legendary Wood Brothers team only added to Lund's winning advantage. Leonard and Glen Wood's fuel computations had paid off! And, despite stories to the contrary, Lund crossed the finish line with fuel to spare, even taking a victory lap in a car that still had fuel in it when it was loaded onto the truck. Tiny's wife would later sum it up best, saying, "When he took the checkered flag, he had run the whole



(Left) Although the Maserati's nose, which by lifting at speed had initiated the accident, was essentially untouched by the conflagration, the rest of the car was heavily damaged. Note the doors cut into the roof that complicated the rescue efforts. (Above) Charred remains of the cockpit where Panch struggled to escape the inferno engulfing him after his speed record run went nastily awry. (Below) Interested onlookers survey the damaged car in the aftermath of the accident, rescue and recovery. Extensive blistering of the paintwork and the broken rear window surround offer further testimony to the severity of the flames.







(Above, left to right) Marvin Panch stands with his rescuers, Bill Wimble, Ernie Gahan, Jerry Raborn, Steve Petrasek and Tiny Lund, as they are honored with Carnegie Medals for civilian heroism after saving his life. The five were also awarded the Buddy Shuman Award for their outstanding contribution to NASCAR. (Left) On raceday at Daytona, the heavily bandaged and deeply grateful Panch appeared at the racetrack, ignoring doctor's orders and escaping his ambulance to express his gratitude to his rescuers. He's shown here with Steve Petrasek whose own bandaged hand is readily evident.

... on one set of tires; he was out of gas and he had 18 cents in his pocket. It was incredible." Lund's victory earned him a \$4,600 payday, and both he and the Woods would give Panch part of their winnings.

Panch attended the Daytona 500 only a little over two weeks after his accident in an ambulance—an ambulance he wasn't supposed to leave. He couldn't resist, however, waving to the crowd and greeting his rescuers.

Then, continuing the long road back to recovery and supported by friends and family, he made slow but steady progress. In mid-March, Panch would be joined in Daytona's Halifax Hospital by fellow NASCAR driver Nelson Stacy, himself recovering from a brutal practice accident at Atlanta earlier in the month. The two drivers recuperated together with stories of crashed wheelchairs and conversations between rooms on NASCAR-supplied walkie-talkies being told.

Panch said he very much valued a visit made to his bedside during his hospitalization by NASA astronauts Gus Grissom, Alan Shepard and John Glenn.

Panch would return to racing in NASCAR's premier series beginning in June of 1963 at Charlotte Motor Speedway, ironically at the same point in the season his hospital buddy Stacy also returned to the circuit. Panch again piloted the Wood Brothers Ford, qualifying 3<sup>rd</sup> and bringing the car home in 7<sup>th</sup> after the race was delayed for two weeks by rain. Following a string of top-ten finishes and a pole at Atlanta Motor Speedway later in June, he would return to the winner's circle at North Wilkesboro Speedway in September. His strong effort following his return to the track earned him in a 13<sup>th</sup>-place finish in that year's points race, despite his lengthy absence from the circuit.

The five rescuers had combined their efforts to save Panch. They were all ordinary men of extraordinary courage and humility. In a letter to the Carnegie Hero Fund, Petrasek would say "... Hope I can live up to such recognition." Those sentiments were echoed in Wimble's letter when he said "... I hope that my conduct may always be in keeping with ownership of the medal." In a handwritten note, Gahan's wife Jean simply thanked the Fund and said they would use the money to construct the fireplace Ernie had wanted to build. Raborn's obituary upon his passing didn't even mention the medal. And that NASCAR official who assisted? He said he was doing his job and as he was being paid to do it, figured he shouldn't be considered. He asked his name and participation not be included so as not to take away the "iota" from the others' accomplishment. We are complying with his wishes here.

Reflecting upon that day almost 50 years later, Marvin Panch said that in a way it was the worst and best day of his life; the worst because he got into this mess, and the best because he got out of it. As to the five who saved Panch that Valentine's Day half a century ago, all but Bill Wimble have now passed, leaving him and Panch as the sole survivors among those in this story. Perhaps the final touch of irony is that Marvin Panch has outlived almost all of his rescuers, without whose help he would have ended up as that footnote we spoke of earlier.

Nearly half a century on from the day their lives became inextricably intertwined, rescuer Bill Wimble (left) and rescuee Marvin Panch were reunited during race weekend at Charlotte Motor Speedway in 2012.



Perhaps never has a hero's reward been so great. Tiny Lund poses with his wife in Victory Lane after driving the Wood Brothers Ford to victory in the Daytona 500 while substituting for the man he helped rescue, Marvin Panch.



(Above) Lund received the spoils of victory after winning the 1963 Daytona 500. Note the tape on the door where his name replaced that of the car's originally intended driver, Marvin Panch. (Below) Lund poses for the standard pre-race publicity photo standing next to the #21 Wood Brothers Ford that he had been assigned to at the request of the man he was replacing, Panch.

